

Environmentalists call for cruise ships to clean up dumping

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By Tim Molloy, Associated Press

SANTA MONICA, California — Environmentalists called on Royal Caribbean Wednesday to protect marine habitats and human health by cleaning up sewage and wastewater dumped from its cruise ships.

A ship can dump up to 30,000 gallons of sewage a day as well as 255,000 gallons of "gray water" from laundries, showers, sinks, and dishwashers, the nonprofit advocacy organization Oceana and other groups said at a press conference.

"We're calling on them to end the wake of shame," said Moira Chapin, a field organizer for Environment California.

Oceana organizer Jesse Littlewood said pollution from cruise ships contributes to oxygen-free ocean dead zones and algae buildup that kills marine life and may threaten human health.

Littlewood said the company should begin using advanced wastewater treatment systems on all its ships. Royal Caribbean has such systems on three vessels, but its other 25 ships use Coast Guard-approved marine sanitation devices that have been criticized as inefficient.

The company issued a statement saying the environmentalists were "grandstanding" and ignoring Royal Caribbean's cleanup efforts. Company spokesman Michael Sheehan said the company follows U.S. Coast Guard and international regulations on waste disposal.

The advanced water treatment systems haven't worked well on two of the three company ships that have them, and the company is seeking better designs, Sheehan said. Littlewood said the systems cost about \$2 million a ship, but Sheehan said they would be more expensive.

Sheehan said Royal Caribbean has improved its environmental practices since 1999, when it paid \$27 million after acknowledging it had polluted repeatedly and lied to the Coast Guard about it.

"We used that as a catalyst to try to be a leader in the industry," Sheehan said.

The company statement said Royal Caribbean dumps only 12 miles or more from shore, but Littlewood said loopholes in clean water laws allow cruise ships to dump three miles out.

Source: Associated Press